Sl. No.	Item	Rural	Urban
1	DELs (Wired) (Lines)	412857	1224814
2	WLL Connections (Lines)	79067	25091
3	Number of exchanges (Nos.)	1754	543
4	VPTs (Nos.)	76004	Not applicable
5	Cellular Connections (Lines)	none	644873

In addition, the private operators are also providing telecom services.

(c) BSNL has planned to provide 45000 lines during 2004-05 in the rural areas of P(East) including 5,000 landline connections and 40.000 connection on WLL. upto 31.10.2004, 8828 landline connections and 3770 on WLL have been provided in rural area during the current year.

A non-lapsable universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has been set up to fund telecom services being provided by both public and private sector operators in the rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices. Such a support is expected to enhance the availability of telecom services in rural areas.

Contract between BSNL and Reliance

2243. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(b) whether BSNL and Reliance group of industries were given a contract for setting up community phones in 50,000 villages with support from the Universal Services Obligation (USO) fund;

(b) if so, whether any contract between Government and these companies have been signed;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government have identified 50,000 villages for the purpose; and

(e) if so, by when this project is likely to start?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) M/s Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)

and Reliance Infocomm Limited (RIL), who emerged as the lowest bidders' for receipt of support from Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund, have entered into an agreement with the office of the Administrator, USO Fund for the provision of 46,253 Rural Community Phones (RCPs).

(b) and (c) Agreements have been signed on 30-09-2004 by the office of Administrator USO fund separately with BSNL and M/s RIL for providing Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in 24,794 and 21,459 villages respectively. As per the terms and conditions stipulated in the agreement, these RCPs are to be provided by September, 2007.

(d) 48,301 villages were identified having population of more than 2,000 and where only a single village public telephone was working and there was no other Public Call facility like Public Call Office (PCO).

(e) The project is deemed to have commenced from the date of the agreement.

E-governance scheme for Madhya Pradesh

†2244. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the status of Madhya Pradesh is worse than the other States in the field of Information Technology development;

(b) if not, the details thereof;

(c) the incentives being given and the assistance being made available by Government to Madhya Pradesh for promotion of e-governance; and

(d) the position of Madhya Pradesh in the field of Information Technology development as per the India E-Readiness Assignment Report, 2003?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a), (b) and (d) Government has carried out an e-Readiness Assessment of States/Union Territories (UTs) and its finding are published in a report entitled, 'India: E-Readiness Assessment Report 2003'. In this Report, States have been classified into six categories- Leaders, Aspiring

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.